DER SHEYDIM-TANTZ
Ester Kraytman, 1936

Chapter One: In Zshelekhitz

"Mikhl vakst *borukh Hashem* oyf a *talmid-chokhem.*"

Ot di verter flegt Dvoyreleh taylmol[1] hern dem foter irn, Reb Avrom Bern, dem Zshelekhitzer *Rov,* a zog ton tzu der muter, vos iz a *chutz*[2] rebitzin geven a *min*[3] privat-sekretar un *ba'al-yoetz*[4] R. Avrom Bers, *machmes*[5] tomer[6] flegt darfn zayn an *asifeh*[7] amol in shtetl, tomer hot er shoyn *mamesh* gemuzt betn a *hesofeh*[8] un *stam* vi epes a farviklt[9] *inyen* tzu derleydikn[10], iz es shoyn geven der rebitzins, Reyzeles, arbet. Hot zi shoyn, ligndik oyf der kushetke[11], a krenglekhe[12], an ayngedarte, nisht gerut, biz der

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[1] Taylmol – occasionally (from tayl + mol)
[2] A chutz – besides, outside of, in addition to (Hebrew *chutz,* "outside")
[3] Min – sort, kind (Hebrew *min,* "kind")
[4] Ba'al yoetz – advisor (Hebrew, same)
[5] Machmes – because, on account of the fact that . . . (Hebrew, *mechamat,* same)
[6] Tomer – if, in case, in the event
[7] Asifeh – meeting, assembly (Hebrew *aseyfah* – "gathering")
[8] Hesofeh – a book appendix or a pay raise (Hebrew *hosafah* – "addition")
[9] Farviklt – complicated; inyen – issue or matter (Hebrew *inyan,* same)
[10] Derleydikn – to take care of
[11] Kushetke – sofa; viz French *couchette* ("berth in a train compartment")
[12] Krenklekh – sickly (from *krank*); ayngedarte – dried up, shriveled; gerut – rested

sharfer *moyech* irer hot nisht a pak geton dos *emes*-pasike[1] vort far zaynetvegn[2].

Reb Avrom Ber hot getrogn a shvartze sametene kapote, a por *rabonishe* shikh un zokn, gehat a fayne blonde bord mit a por tunkele *peyes,* vos hobn im tzuzamen *goyrem*[3] geven dem *hadres-ponim* zaynem.

– Un vos vaks ikh oyf, Tateshi? – flegt Dvoyreleh taylmol a freg ton baym foter, halb in shpas, halb ernst, *machmes* zi hot nokh keynmol nisht gehert, az imitzer zol zi oploybn.

Reb Avrom Ber flegt ir *al-pi-rov*[4] gornisht entfern, oder *efsher* a zog ton, az a meydl darf gornisht nisht oyfvaksn. Dos hot Dvoyrehlen ge'art[5]. *Halemay*[6] iz di Mameshi "epes" oysgevaksn? Zi iz dokh oykh amol geven a meydl!

Meyle[7]*,* hot es *take* Reb Avrom Ber gehaltn far an *avleh*[8] mit Reyzeles sharfzinikayt[9], iz zikh gezesn un gelernt un, *a chutz* in *p'shetlekh,*[10] *l'gamrey* opgezogt[11] zikh fun trakhtn. Er hot gantz gut gevust, az "zi" iz, *borukh Hashem,* a *mechukeymes*[12]*,* haynt tzulib[13] vos mishn zikh in ire *asokim?* Iz er zikh *take* gezesn *al hatoyreh v'al ha'avoydeh,* ruik gekeyt

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[1] Emes – true, truth (Hebrew, same); pasik – appropriate, fitting, opportune

[2] Far zaynetvegn – for his sake

[3] Goyrem – cause (Heb. *gorem*, same); Hadres-Ponim – stately appearance (Heb. *hadrat-panim,* same)

[4] Al-pi-rov – most of the time (Heb., same)

[5] Arn – to bother; ge'art – bothered

[6] Lemai – for what reason, why (a particularly Talmudic Aramaic form)

[7] Meyle – whatever, so be it, anyway

[8] Avleh – wrong, injury, injustice (Heb. avlah)

[9] Sharfzinikayt – cleverness (from sharf + zin + ig + kayt)

[10] P'shetlekh – quibbles, hair-splitting arguments (Heb. *p'shat* – the meaning of a text)

[11] Opzogn zikh – refuse

[12] Mechukeymes – wise (Heb. feminine of *m'chukam,* from *chakham*)

[13] Tzulib – because of, due to, for the sake of

a krish bord[1], untergebomket[2] a "nayem" *nign,* vos flegt nokh yeder *n'siyeh kim'at*[3] brengen tzu firn tzuzamen mit etlekhe kerblekh (rubl) funem rabin, vos er hot adoptirt, *machmes* keyn sandz iz geven tzu-vayt.

P'shetlekh[4] hot Reb Avrom Ber lib gehat s'lebn — nor nisht keyn glatike[5]. Farkert[6], vos mer shpitzlekh[7], dorndik un *l'hakhisdik* — altz liber hot er zey gehat. Vos mer fartzlontert[8], senkevate un *akshonesdik* — altz interesanter zenen zey im geven, mit altz mer *cheyshek* hot er zikh fartift in zey, altz mer flegt dos gutmutike[9] *ponim* mit di gute, broyne oygn oygblitzn, altz flamiker di bakn[10] vern, altz vayser der shtern un hekher, — *b'eys* er hot epes dertapt[11], *mechadesh* geven, altz a gresern farnem[12] flegt di bord zayne bekumen, altz mer flegt er zi peynikn[13], tzupn, baysn, dreyen arum finger *b'shasn* trakhtn — derfar iz der *naches* geven a groyser*, b'eys* er iz "dergangen" un zi opgelozt[14].

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[1] Your editor is clueless here. Ruik – quiet(ly); gekeyt – chained; krish – crumb (or maybe Hebrew karish meaning "congealed"); bord – beard.

[2] Bamken – to sing or intone the syllables *bim bam bam*

[3] N'siyeh – journey (Heb.); kim'at – almost (Heb.)

[4] P'shetlekh – this time it's an adjective meaning something like "simply put" or "basically"

[5] Glatik – smooth. So "not just when it went smoothly."

[6] Farkert – on the contrary

[7] Shpitzlekh – pin pricks; torndik – thorny; *l'hakhisdik* – infuriating (Heb.)

[8] Fartzlontert – ??; senkevate – knots of a tree; akshonesdik – stubborn (Heb. akshanut)

[9] Gutmutik – good natured

[10] Bakn – cheeks

[11] Dertapn – to detect, spot, find unexpectedly

[12] Farnem – stature, bulk

[13] Peynik – torture; tzup – pain, twinge; baysn – bite

[14] Dergeyn – to find, figure out, achieve; oplozn – to let go, abandon

Reb Avrom Bers bord hot a shtarkn tayl in zayne oyftuekhtzn[1] gehat. Iz amol a shvere *halokheh* geven, a shver shtikl *Yoyreh Deyeh*[2]*,* iz zi shoyn zayn "rekhte hant" geven. Un amol, nokh eyder er iz Zshelekhitzer *rov* gevorn, ven der shver hot im *mamesh* getzvungen[3] optzuzogn zikh oyf a vayle fun di *chidushim* un er hot nebekh gemuzt, tzulib *takhlis,* nemen lernen *Mogen Avrom*[4]*,* — hot zi im demolt shoyn getray gedint. Nisht gekukt deroyf, vos zi iz demolt nokh *kimat* a *tinoykesl*[5] geven, iz zi fun im genug oysgeshtanen[6] — mer nokh vi fun Rayzelen. *Machmes* tzu Reyzelen flegt er zikh nor vendn, ven er hot gedarft epes an *eytzeh* in veltlekhe *inyonim,* oder az er hot amol gedarft hobn a *posek* — un nisht hobndik gelernt keyn *Tanakh,* hot er gemuzt onkumen tzum vayb.

Ober tzu Reyzelen iz er nisht fargangen, vi in der bord arayn. Mit ir hot er zikh gehaltn *derekh-eretzdik*[7] un iz geven tzufridn, az zi hot bavilikt[8] tzu entfern. Mit Reyzelen kon men nisht ton, vos men vil.

— Zog-zshe, zay-zshe *moychl,* vu shteyt der un der *posek?*

Reyzele flegt veln a shmeykhl ton fun groys *hanoeh,* vos der man darf tzu ir onkumen in azelkhe *inyonim* oykh, un nisht konen . . . nisht konen, tzulib der shpitzikeyt funem *ponim* irn, fun di kinbakn[9] un *b'iker* di gombe, flegt zi zikh fartrakhtn, fananderefenen di groys groye oygn, tzuleygn di vays-bloye durkhzikhtike[10] hant tzum shtern un a zog ton:

— In *Shmuel Aleph*, in *Yeshayeh*, in *Tehilim* — oder vu er iz grod[11] geshtanen der *posek.*

Reb Avrom Ber flegt *tamid* a gikhn zog ton *"shkoyech"* un plink araynkhapn zikh tzurik

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[1] Oyftu – accomplishment, achievement

[2] Yoreh De'ah – a section of the Shulchan Arukh, the 16th Century code of Jewish law compiled by Joseph Karo.

[3] Tzvingen – to force, coerce

[4] Magen Avraham – a 17th Century commentary on the Shulchan Arukh by Avraham Gombiner.

[5] Tinoykesl – a female baby (Heb. tinoket + Yiddish diminutive suffix)

[6] Oys-shteyn – to bear, put up with

[7] Derekh-eretzdik – respectfully (Heb. derekh eretz – the way [or etiquette] of the land)

[8] Bavilikn – to deign

[9] Kinbak – jawbone; probably made up of *kin* (chin) and *bak* (cheeks); gombe – chin

[10] Durkhzikhtik – translucent

[11] Grod – "happen to"

in *bin-din-shtub*[1], iberlozndik Reyzelen a fartrakhte, tzi hot zi nisht amol keyn *toes*[2] gehat? Nisht gehat keyn *toes*, flegt zi tzurik arunterrukn beyde dine fislekh hinter zikh oyf der kushetke un tzurk araynkukn in a *seyferl*...

[1] Presumably a typo for *beys-din shtub.*

[2] *Toes* – error (Heb. ta'ut)